

id: 132357
date: 11/30/2007 17:07
refid: 07HAVANA1113
origin: US Interests Section Havana
classification: SECRET
destination:
header:
VZCZCXRO7797
RR RUEHAO RUEHCD RUEHGA RUEHGD RUEHHA RUEHHO RUEHMC RUEHNG RUEHNL
RUEHQU RUEHRD RUEHRG RUEHRS RUEHTM RUEHVC
DE RUEHUB #1113 3341707
ZNY SSSSS ZZH
R 301707Z NOV 07
FM USINT HAVANA
TO RUEHWH/WESTERN HEMISPHERIC AFFAIRS DIPL POSTS
RUESDM/JTLO MIAMI FL
RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 2552

----- header ends -----

S E C R E T HAVANA 001113

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/30/2017
TAGS: CASC, CU, KDEM, PHUM, SCUL
SUBJECT: PASTORS FOR PEACE SERVE AMERICAN MEDICAL STUDENTS
THREATS FOR THANKSGIVING DINNER

Classified By: COM Michael E. Parmly for Reason 1.4(d).

1. (C) On November 23, 2007 at the first ever meeting of USINT's American citizen wardens (SEPTTEL to follow), a fifth year medical student at Havana's Latin American Medical School reported that he and the other students receiving scholarships from Pastors for Peace were warned against contact with USINT in their annual thanksgiving dinner. The American Citizen student, who serves as the warden for the medical school, told CONOFF that Pastors for Peace director Luscious Walker took a threatening tone in his speech this year. In the past Walker has complimented and encouraged the students but this year Walker spent over an hour warning students against having contact with USINT. He threatened that Pastors for Peace would consider withdrawing scholarships to students who contacted USINT and said that "we would like you to support this government (the Cuban government) but we demand that you at least remain neutral."

2. (C) The student said that he suspects that the change in tone is the result of a letter that he recently wrote to the five Cuban spies currently incarcerated in the United States. The student says that after being repeatedly asked to write

an encouraging letter to the five he decided to write a letter in which he attacked the Cuban government for holding political prisoners and asked the five to join him in demanding not only their own freedom, but also the freedom of all political prisoners in Cuba. The student says that within hours many of his classmates, including his American classmates, confronted him with remarks that he made in the supposedly sealed letter.

3. (C) The student said that he felt that his fellow students were generally intimidated by the speech and that he believed that they will avoid contact with the section in the future. He said that he doubted that any students would attend a USINT hosted Christmas dinner for the medical students. The student and several classmates attended a Christmas dinner with the Consul General and consular officers last year.

4. (C) The student said that he fears for his own, and his third country national wife's, scholarships. He said that he will continue to serve as a warden and to come to USINT to use the internet and receive newspapers but that he will limit his contact with USINT officials to protect the five years he and his wife have invested in their medical education.

Comment

5. (C) Given Walker's past relationship with USINT it is not surprising that they would like to limit their student's contacts with USINT, but the students were reportedly taken aback by the tone of the speech. While the student attributed the harsh comments to his own activities, USINT believes that Walker may also have been reacting to our attempts to increase contacts between the students and the Consular Section. There have been informal contacts between USINT and the students in the past but recently the Consular Section has designated the medical school as a functional region in the warden system and Walker's speech was given just one day before the first ever wardens meeting was held at the COM residence. USINT is also considering other ways to improve provision of consular services to the students (and other Americans outside Havana). This includes the possibility of a consular outreach visit to the school. Walker's comments suggest that he would deny all contact between USINT and the American citizen students even for basic consular services available to American students studying world wide.

PARMLY

=====CABLE ENDS=====